

Tamiflu treatment for likely sufferers of A(H1N1) flu

If you have caught the flu, treatment with Tamiflu can shorten your period of illness and reduce the risk of complications if you start taking it as quickly as possible after you become ill.

The Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services has launched a temporary scheme allowing qualified pharmacists to prescribe Tamiflu and Relenza. However, before being given the medicines you will have to fill out a special form.

Tamiflu for people at risk

If you belong to one of the defined risk categories and you have a high temperature and other flu-like symptoms, such as a dry cough, aching muscles, sore throat and stuffy nose, the health authorities recommend that you start taking Tamiflu as quickly as possible (no later than 48 hours) after the onset of one or more of the symptoms mentioned above. This is particularly important if you know that someone in your immediate circle already has the flu.

People not in any risk category

If you have a high temperature and other symptoms, such as a dry cough, aching muscles, sore throat and stuffy nose, you can also take Tamiflu if you wish. If several people in your immediate circle are suffering from influenza it is likely that you too will have the disease if you have any of the above-mentioned symptoms. However, if treatment with Tamiflu is to have any effect it is important that you start taking it as quickly as possible (no later than 48 hours) after you become ill.

Preventive treatment with Tamiflu

The health authorities recommend that members of defined risk categories start taking Tamiflu before they themselves become ill if anyone in their immediate circle catches influenza. Pregnant women are recommended to take Relenza preventively if anyone with whom they have close contact catches the flu. Relenza is available over the counter at pharmacies in the same way as Tamiflu.

When should you contact a doctor

If you become seriously ill, you should always contact your GP or

local emergency medical centre.

Buying Tamiflu

To buy Tamiflu without a doctor's prescription you must complete a special form. In it you will be asked to describe your symptoms and provide some personal details (including your personal ID number). This is necessary because treatment with Tamiflu must be recorded in your medical notes. You can download the relevant form from www.pandemi.no (from Thursday, 5 November), or get one from a pharmacy.

If you cannot get to a pharmacy within 24 hours after becoming ill, you should contact your local emergency medical centre, where you will be given a course of Tamiflu. Some pharmacies are also open on Sundays.

It is not necessary for patients to take their forms to the pharmacy in person. You can pick up Tamiflu on behalf of someone else, eg if someone in your family is ill. You must bring with you a completed form for each person for whom you are collecting a course of Tamiflu.

Prices

At the same time a temporary scheme is being introduced to reduce the retail price of the two medicines. Tamiflu will cost NOK 50 per course of treatment, while Relenza will cost NOK 51. Patients who do not have a doctor's prescription must pay an additional NOK 20 for the pharmacy requisition. Patients who make use of this temporary scheme will therefore pay around NOK 70 per packet of medicine. The reduction in the price of the medicines is a separate scheme linked to the current pandemic. Patients are therefore not entitled to use their medical cost exemption cards